1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 164-C]

that the caterpillar turns into a butterfly." 000

The forest throughout is interlaced with 133
rivers and streams, and the terrain is gently un- 182
dulating. These rivers, and the larger of the [166]
streams, seem to form effective natural bound- [323]
aries and may well influence migratory ten- [484]
dencies, as the Pygmy both dislikes large ex-
panses of water and lacks the knowledge of how
to bridge them. Reports of journalists and [491]
others of Pygmy bridge-building activities [779]
(Cotlow, 1956) probably result from recent
attempts, by both villagers and European
movie makers, to teach the Pygmies how to
build swing bridges. Putnam (1948, 325) asserts
that the Pygmy probably never has to go more
than 100 yards to find water. Temperatures 132
throughout the year vary only between a low of
70° F. at night and a possible high of 80° F.
during the day. The forest varies with respect 137
to underbrush but on the whole is unimpeded
virgin growth, with a carpet of leaf mold be-
tween the trees. Where villagers have made a
clearing, however, there is thickly tangled
undergrowth.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P 212-C] DAILY LIFE

The food quest, as with the archers, is the primary concern of daily life among the net hunters. The net hunt is considerably more rewarding than the other form of hunt, although it probably occupies as much time. Care and maintenance of the nets are also laborious and time-consuming. Women gather not only as they accompany the hunt, but also on those days when the hunt stays behind in the camp. The children make a not inconsiderable contribution to the family food quest. A common occupation on a non-hunting day is for men and women to assist each other in the making of twine from *nkusa* vine. This twine is used primarily in the repair of hunting nets.

As with the archers, elimination takes place not far from the camp. Refuse is never carried away; it is merely thrown behind the huts. These practices not merely create an unpleasant smell after some weeks, but also attract armies of ants. The Mbuti themselves, however, keep their bodies scrupulously clean, and the favorite recreation of the children is playing about in the shallow streams. The men assert that they can all swim but are never seen doing so; they are certainly much afraid of deep water.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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505 and refused to come to the camp. Some of the
533 men tried to find it, but, as they went after it,
534 it stayed silent for a while, then suddenly was
782 heard on the other side of the camp.
796 Anne Putnam gives one other instance of this kind of meeting. While the evening meal was being eaten, the trumpet was heard and all the women had to shut themselves up. The trumpet approached the camp, and the men ran out to greet it, shouting and beating the drums. The trumpet came right into the clearing. Mrs. Putnam heard much shouting, drumming, hunting cries, and swishing of branches. The trumpet made a quick tour of the circle of huts and was then heard to disappear into the distance. The women were called out. The men were busy
[823] dancing. The women cooked a large meal, and the men all drank salt water so that they would sing well. They sang until about midnight. The trumpet was heard again for a short time early in the morning, in the distance.

505 The occasion for this *molimo* meeting, which
533 lasted about a month, was poor hunting. How-
765 ever, an old woman died during the month.
796 Anne Putnam was told that if the *molimo* had not already been meeting, they would have had to call it out for this occasion. They also explained that the woman's death was the reason

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

338). The Mbuti associate the storms with water, rain, thunder, lightning, rainbows, and snakes, and possibly fire. The net hunters have a particular fear of water and, as do the local villagers, seem to believe in water spirits, or, as they call them, "water animals." These are most frequently associated with death. A water animal is connected with the rainbow, perhaps the most dreaded of all natural phenomena.

As might be expected therefore, such ritual as exists is most often connected with the storm and its symbols. Putnam, who knew of Schebesta's account of ritual among the archers, did not disagree with it in so far as cult practices were described among the net hunters. However, cult practices are far less common, and he mentions no spirit huts or shrines such as were described by Schebesta (1950, 77). Food offerings may be thrown into the undergrowth, though specific information is lacking. I have met net hunters who stoutly deny that they would waste food in this way; certainly I never saw any offerings being made. But Putnam disagrees strongly that prayer or invocation is involved. The net hunters, he says (in unpublished works), do not invoke the storm god or

[P. 237-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

614 Rules concerning the clan totem vary, in theory and practice. Its flesh may never be eaten by members of the clan and, as far as possible, the animal is avoided—alive or dead. If the clan is dispersed, its seceding factions tend to forget their own totem and adopt the totems of the dominant clans in whose areas they settle, evidently, in fact, effectively changing clan affiliation.

784 562 [262] The second kind of taboo mentioned by Putnam is the sex taboo symbolizing the differences in male and female activities. Women and children eat frogs and toads; men refuse to touch them. As mentioned above (p. 211), this [825] difference is probably connected with the as- [823] sociation between these amphibians and both water (portending disaster) and land (the hunt).

784 The third type of taboo is the taboo applicable to times of crisis in the life cycle—puberty, pregnancy, and mourning. At such times certain taboos are observed, but they vary from band to band, and there is no detailed information.

262 Lastly, Putnam mentions the existence of

[1] By "clan" Putnam means a patrician or gens.

[P. 239-B]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1956) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

clearly defined, opening northward into a large central area unclaimed by anyone.

The topography of the Epulu territory is similar to that of most other bands, though without the steep, mountainous ridges that occur slightly further east. The ground is gently undulating, as thickly forested on the hilltops as in the valleys, though the vegetation is much denser along the banks of streams and rivers. It is almost impossible to walk more than a few hundred yards without having to cross a small stream, and after a particularly violent and prolonged rainfall there are areas that become temporarily flooded and the larger streams may become uncrossable torrents. But normally there is little difficulty in traveling from one extreme of the area to another. There are no swamps, the ground is clear of the tangled undergrowth that characterizes old plantation sites, and all but the largest streams are either shallow enough, in places, to be forded or are bridged at intervals by fallen trees. Nowhere do the Mbuti need to build bridges, and nowhere do they do so except in the village context.[2] It is a simple fact that rivers that are too wide to be bridged by a fallen tree are relatively far and few between, and therefore form convenient natural boundaries. There is neither the desire nor the need to cross such rivers. A certain mistrust of large bodies of water strengthens the efficacy of rivers as boundaries, just as the few superstitions to be found among the Mbuti mostly relate to ravines, caves, streams or hills that form other boundaries.

The abundance of game and vegetable food may be taken for

[2] The famous "pygmy" bridge and the spectacular technique of crossing a river by swinging on a vine from one side to the other were taught to the Mbuti, not without difficulty, by an enterprising movie-maker. Patrick Putnam was asked to assist as interpreter, but refused. His first wife, however, went to watch the proceedings. The same group of pygmies retained some knowledge of the technique, and obligingly repeated the act for subsequent "documentary" film units. They are the only group with the knowledge, though they are now less proficient. A more recent movie-maker had to sling a wire hawser across the river and suspend the vine swing from its midpoint. A simple mathematical calculation will reveal the impossibility of the swinging technique, even disregarding the area behind the swing that would have to be cleared, a task in itself beyond Mbuti technology. Assuming the fulcrum is over one bank, and the branches into which the pygmy is to swing are directly over the far bank (a generous assumption), and assuming that the pygmy can be drawn back far enough to swing up to a 45-degree angle at the far end of his swing, the maximum width that can be crossed is three-quarters of the height of the swing. In practical experiment among the Mbuti, I found that effectively half the height of the swing was the maximum horizontal distance that could be so traversed. This would mean that to cross a river a mere hundred yards in width, the fulcrum would have to be some 600 feet up, demanding a tree approaching the height of the Eiffel Tower. Conversely, a swing of the maximum normally practicable length of 60 feet would enable a pygmy to span a stream a mere 30 feet across. Pygmies generally have rather more sense, in such matters, than movie-makers.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti

of honeycomb pressed down above it. Two sticks are prepared in this way by a hunter, and when the cloth is set on fire the hunter waves them both in the air. He then hands each of them to a youth, and the two youths run through the camp and out into the forest around the camp. The womenfolk clap loudly until the youths return and rather unceremoniously put the sticks down near the central fire.

The honey dance also separates the sexes, the women pretending to be bees, men the honey gatherers. Yet another separation, symbolizing the power of the women, is the medicine that is said to attune one's hearing so that one can hear the larvae wriggling in the honeycombs, high up in the trees. A woman prepares a stick which, when blown through, produces a misty spray. She blows into the ears of all the men. The men say that the bubbling noise they hear is the sound of larvae and grubs eating honey, and that it will guide them to the hives.

There is seldom any doubt as to where honey lies, and it is plainly the social rather than the economic importance of the honey season that is being celebrated. This is most clear in the great *anghe* medicine, in which the age groups are further differentiated and which includes attention to orientation that is quite unique in my experience (this, together with several other features, is so singular that it cannot be adequately explained at the moment, but is nonetheless described for its intrinsic interest).

At the *kumu'ngbe* (hearth of honey), a number of youths chop a special *tembu* wood into kindling (the only time I have ever seen kindling prepared). Four hunters supervise. The four hunters then put their honey axes down in the hearth, blades to the center. One of the hunters lines the axes up so they align with the cardinal points of the compass. This done, each hunter takes his ax and draws it toward him, cutting a trench along that line. In this way four trenches, two feet long and three inches wide and deep, are cut. In the center a square is cut so that the four corners indicate the intermediate compass points. The position of the sun is consulted to insure correct alignment.

A senior hunter has meanwhile cut four lengths of *teka* vine, carefully bound so that its juices do not escape. He removes the binding and allows the juice to fill the center square, after which water is added to fill the trenches. The combination of juice and water is said to be *mota*, or powerful. Each vine is laid in a trench, projecting at the extremities. Two youths then take out the vines and shake them

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

had one of our most fruitful treks of all, learning many new and important things about the forest people.

The terrain was very different from that of Epulu, being mountainous and rocky, with jagged boulders sticking out of the ground at crazy angles as though some great city had once been swallowed by an earthquake. But even on the steepest escarpments, where the huge trees seemed to grow out of the very rocks, the Pygmies moved as quickly and surely and silently as elsewhere For the first time I saw Kenge in difficulty, he being as unused to this kind of mountaineering as I was. But we were anxious to press inward as far as we could, and once again we found ourselves almost back at the Epulu: it lay about two days to the southwest at most.

While we were in this part of the forest we heard many stories of the old wars between the various tribes of villagers, as they invaded the forest, and how the Pygmies got caught between them so that they were forced to side with one group or another.

On leaving Nduye we continued southward, past the administrative center of Mambasa, and when we had crossed the Ituri, which at this higher point was, in Kenge's words, "a mere child," we once more left the car and began walking. At the end of a day, having passed through three deserted Pygmy villages, we were beginning to feel dubious at the wisdom of having come so far without a guide when we came to the banks of a large tributary of the Ituri. There, to our mutual surprise, was one of the legendary vine bridges, slung high up over the swirling waters, suspended by lianas fastened to the topmost branches of the trees on either bank. I was glad that Kenge was amazed, because there is every reason to believe that these bridges, contrary to the information supplied by romantically minded movie-makers, are not of Pygmy origin. To cross the bridge we climbed up a series of logs leading to a fork in the tree to which our end of the bridge was anchored, and from there we made our swaying way across. Kenge refused to look down, and when I stopped in the

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

FOREST HORIZONS

The missionary and I were sitting outside at the time, going through his morning ritual of drinking tea. I went over to see what had happened, and to ask if they wanted any medicine. They said no, but they would like something to make the pain go away until they could prepare their own medicine. All I had was aspirin, but in any case I had more faith in their powers of healing than in mine. Kenge asked in a whisper why the missionary had not come over, but was continuing to sip his tea, keeping his back to us. I did not know, and I said nothing until after the next prayer meeting. As usual, prayers were offered for all those converts who had minor ailments, and for the new road, but not a word was said about the injured Pygmy, lying in a hut not more than ten yards away. Then I did ask, and I was told, "Why should I pray for him? He is not a Christian." The Pygmies were all standing around, and heard, as they were meant to hear. They had little idea of what Christianity was, but from that moment I doubt if any of them thought that it had much to offer them.

At the end of our stay there, the missionary asked Kenge what he thought of the Christian God now that he had been privileged to live in a Christian community. Kenge said with his usual frankness, "It is the biggest falsehood I know." And so I was glad for Kenge to meet other Christians who had a better idea of what their religion stood for, and the Bells were certainly such.

It was while we were with them that Kenge first began to realize that there really was another world, beyond the forest. He had often heard people talk about it, and up at Paulis the forest was thinned almost to mere savannah; but nowhere had he really seen beyond the forest. The mission was built on a high hill, cleared of vegetation so that crops could be planted to supply the mission school and hospital with food. Usually the distant horizons were hazy, and everywhere we looked down only on a sea of trees. Several times I tried to tell Kenge that beyond this lay another world, a world of lakes and mountains and open plains, but he just nodded disbelievingly. He

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

• 823 had never seen even a hill, as such. He had climbed up them, inside the forest, and had seen small hills such as the one on the far side of the Epulu, and the one on which the Nduye mission stood, but that was all. One evening, however, we were both sitting on a boulder at the highest point of the Biasiku mission, looking over the forest. To the east the sky was becoming less and less hazy, and gradually out of the haze a great black mass began to form. Kenge saw it before I did, and asked if it was a bad storm cloud. It was the vast bulk of the Ruwenzori, the Mountains of the Moon.

We never saw the peaks, but even the lower ranges towered so far above the forest that Kenge was almost frightened. He asked me about them, and I did my best, but it was next to impossible to describe things of which he had no experience, and for which there were not even any appropriate words in his language. His curiosity was thoroughly aroused, and feeling a slight hankering myself to see that lovely part of Africa again, I asked him if he would like to have a holiday and go over there, to see the outside world for himself. He hesitated a long time, and then asked how far the mountains were beyond the forest. I said that they were not more than a day's drive from the last of the trees, to which he responded with disbelief, "*No* trees? *No* trees at all?" He was very dubious about this, and asked me if it was a good country, and what the villagers were like there. I told him that it was very much like my own country in some ways, that it was very good, and that there were few villages.

This decided him and he agreed to go, providing that we brought enough food to last us all the time we were to be out of the forest. [186] He was going to have nothing to do with savages who lived in a land without trees.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

the movement of his mouth and his eyes and gestures of his hands conveyed what he was saying. As if singing to himself, he said, "I was wrong. This *is* a good place, though I don't like it; it must be good, because there are so many animals. There is no noise of fighting. It is good because the sky is clear and the ground is clean. It is good because I feel good; I feel as though I and the whole world were sleeping and dreaming. Why do people always make so much noise?" And then he added, with infinite wistfulness, "If only there were more trees . . ."

As the sun sank lower we watched the hippopotami playing in the Semliki, directly beneath us. They heaved their great bodies out of the water and opened their gaping mouths wide, snorting and grunting before they sank back beneath the surface with a tremendous splash that sent waves rolling to the shore. Farther down the river two bulls were fighting, but only half in earnest. Soon they all subsided and only the tips of their noses were left poking just above the surface of the water.

Then came a procession of almost every type of animal in the park, one after the other, each picking its way with unhurried grace to the water's edge. On our side of the river they came right past where Kenge and I were sitting, down a narrow path that disappeared from sight beneath us. We next saw them as they emerged at the bottom and carefully waded into the water, looking all around to make sure that there were no rivals near by. As one group of animals moved away, another came and took their place. The elephants that we had passed on the road were the last we saw, and as it was getting dark, we retreated to the safety of the guest houses. We cooked and ate our evening meal in the kitchen, leaving the dining room unused, for there were no other guests in the park.

When we had finished, Henri tried once more to persuade Kenge to go with him to the village, but Kenge refused. Warning us to go straight back to the guest house Henri disappeared, spear in hand,